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SIPDIS

USAID/RDM-A/BANGKOK PRIORITY

STATE FOR G; CA/OCS/ACS/EAP; EAP/EX; EAP/BCLTV; EAP/EP; INR;
OES/STC (PBATES); OES/IHA (DSINGER AND NCOMELLA)
BANGKOK FOR RMO, CDC, USAID/RDM/A (MFRIEDMAN AND JMACARTHUR)
USDA FOR FAS/PASS TO APHIS
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FOR OSD/ISA/AP (LSTERN)
USAID FOR ANE AND GH (DCARROLL, SCLEMENTS AND PCHAPLIN)
STATE PASS USTR (ELENA BRYAN)
STATE ALSO PASS HHS/OGHA (EELVANDER)
ROME FOR FAO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMED](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [EAGR](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [TBIO](#) [VM](#) [AFLU](#)
SUBJECT: VIETNAM: AVIAN INFLUENZA WEEKLY REPORT FOR DECEMBER
1, 2005

REF: A) Hanoi 3124

[1](#)1. (U) Summary. There have been no new human Avian Influenza (AI) deaths in Vietnam since October 29. The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed Vietnam's 66th human AI case on November 25 after a 15-year old boy contracted H5N1. During an informal donors' meeting chaired by the World Bank and WHO on November 30, the Ministry of Health (MOH) outlined their Action Plan to Control Avian Influenza (AI) Pandemic in Humans and requested USD 147 million to fund public health-related equipment, drugs, surveillance and training needs in 2006. The Government of Vietnam (GVN) conducted a mock AI preparedness drill in Hanoi on November 27 and launched a new AI website for the public on November 30. Poultry products are no longer available in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City. End Summary.

QUICK AI SNAPSHOT -----

[1](#)2. (U) As of November 29, 2005:

	Since 2003	Since January 2005
Human AI Deaths in Vietnam	42	22
Human AI Cases in Vietnam	93	66

[1](#)3. (U) Thus far, AI in poultry has affected 199 communes and wards of 72 districts in 17 provinces and cities. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) Veterinary Department, Vietnam has vaccinated 164 million poultry, including 108 million chickens and 56 million ducks.

VIETNAM'S 66TH AI CASE CONFIRMED -----

[1](#)4. (U) The WHO confirmed on November 25 that a 15-year-old boy from Haiphong Province had H5N1 AI (reftel) but survived. The boy was hospitalized on November 16, but was later discharged. According to recent press reports, a three year-old boy from the Mekong Delta province of Tien Giang is suspected to have AI, but this has not been confirmed. Officially, according to the WHO, Vietnam has reported 66 human AI cases since January 2005, resulting in 22 deaths.

AI ON THE WEB -----

[1](#)5. (U) The GVN inaugurated an AI Internet website on November 30 to inform the general public about AI. The website has useful AI-related information, but is written in Vietnamese. The website is www.cumgiacam.gov.vn.

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION IN VIETNAM -----

[1](#)6. (SBU) On November 30, the World Bank and WHO convened an informal donor coordination meeting to facilitate closer integration of ongoing and future donor activities with the Ministry of Health (MOH) and discuss specific public-health/AI-related needs for 2006. The meeting was held as a prelude to a formal World Bank/WHO/GVN donors' meeting to be held December 13. Representatives from the World Bank, WHO, Australia, Canada, European Union, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United States and United Kingdom were present.

[1](#)7. (SBU) World Bank Country Director Klaus Rohland and WHO Country Representative Hans Troedsson stressed that the international community should not duplicate AI interventions in Vietnam and must also work together to

ensure there are no gaps. Rohland stressed that this particular call for donor support focuses on enabling MOH to build capacity for AI as well as other infectious diseases at central, provincial and community levels and that "soft" AI-related needs, such as equipment maintenance, training and software should not be overlooked by donors. Troedsson highlighted two key areas for immediate donor support: surveillance ("if we don't see it, we won't catch it") and information/education, which has been largely neglected as Vietnam enters the high-risk flu season.

18. (SBU) During the meeting, MOH Department of Planning and Finance Vice Director N.H. Long gave a detailed presentation about MOH's Action Plan to Control AI Pandemic in Humans and asked for USD 147 million for AI-related equipment, drugs, surveillance and training needs in 2006. Specifically, Long said the MOH needs to focus more support toward prevention, treatment and essential services.

18. (U) The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will be providing Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos with a USD 30 million grant to contain AI and other diseases. ADB will provide the funds to help the affected countries develop their surveillance and response systems and the grant will be administered within the framework of the ADB-backed Greater Mekong Subregion economic cooperation program.

USAID AI BEHAVIOR CHANGE PROJECT

19. (U) In response to a request from the Ministry of Information and Culture, AED/Ogilvy Public Relations (OPR) will be providing assistance for the training of the media in reporting on AI under the AI Behavior Change Communication Project. Three one-day workshops will be held in Hanoi, Hue and Ho Chi Minh City, each with around 200 participants. The tentative dates for the workshop are December 9, 12 and 15. The team is discussing with the Public Affairs Section (PAS) the possibility of providing a specialist to conduct the media skills training. The presentation topics may include: responsible and factual reporting, empowering your audience to protect against AI and integrating behavior change messages into your stories. OPR will manage the organization of the event and will arrange for some of the presenters and facilitators.

POULTRY RELATED ISSUES

10. (U) According to November 30 press reports, MARD is considering culling the country's entire poultry stock of 220 million fowls to combat AI. The idea is facing strong objections from poultry producers after millions of dollars have already been spent on the poultry vaccination program. In the meantime, the poultry vaccination program continues in Vietnam and the Chinese government recently provided USD 174,000 to help Chinese businesses ship poultry vaccines from China to Ho Chi Minh City.

11. (U) The Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City has also followed up on news reports that the Department of Animal Health is poisoning pigeons and other wild birds in that city. Animal health officials reported they were conducting experiments to see if it was feasible to poison the city's pigeons without harming other animals and humans; however, no program has been implemented to date. According to Reuters, the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization said that the wild birds around Ho Chi Minh City were "highly unlikely" to carry the H5N1 virus.

12. (U) To help farmers with their poultry losses, the Vietnam Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development will reduce its monthly loan interest rates from 1.5 percent to 0.15 percent to poultry farmers. According to press reports, the Ministry of Finance and MARD have also asked banks to extend the repayment deadline by one year for farmers affected by AI.

GVN PRACTICES FOR AN AI OUTBREAK

13. (U) The GVN held its first AI outbreak drill in Hanoi on November 27. The drill involved approximately 1,000 health workers and civilians who responded to a simulated AI outbreak in Hanoi's Long Bien District. A battalion of health, civilian and military workers converged upon the neighborhood where thirty individuals simulated having contracted AI. According to news reports, police sealed off roads, transferred patients to a neighborhood hospital and health workers wearing protective clothing sprayed disinfectant around the surrounding neighborhood. This was the GVN's second AI exercise using "live" victims in response to the continued concern of an AI pandemic in country; an earlier exercise was conducted in HCMC. According to reports, Minister of Health Tran Thi Trung Chien was present during the drill.

BYE-BYE CHICKEN FEATHER DUSTERS!

14. (U) With poultry not available in Hanoi's markets and restaurants, local suppliers and consumers are having to find alternatives to chicken and eggs. In fact, the use of frog legs is now often seen as a substitute for chicken. The real test, however, will come during Vietnamese New Year or "Tet" in late January 2006 when demand for poultry reaches an annual peak. Chicken is a traditional dish often served by most Vietnamese families during Tet and an informal survey of local embassy staff has revealed that pork or seafood will be a likely replacement, albeit with mild protests.

15. (U) Interestingly, chicken feather dusters are also becoming a rarity in Hanoi because the number of vendors selling them is on the decline since the GVN has banned their production. Prices have actually tumbled, not increased, due to low consumer demand and the fear that the feathers may contain H5N1.

MARINE